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ORBITAL MISSILE HINTED BY SOVIET

General Seems to Confirm McNamara's Statement

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MOSCOW, Nov. 18—A Soviet rocket-forces general appeared today to confirm Pentagon reports that the Soviet Union had a nuclear-warhead missile capable of sudden attack from relatively low altitude.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said on Nov. 3 that a series of missile tests in the last year had indicated that the Russians were perfecting such a weapon.

The missile, which would descend on a target from orbital flight about 100 miles above three minutes to defenders using present radar detection systems.

By comparison, regular ballistic missiles follow a trajectory that takes them about 800 miles above earth, enabling early-awrning radar to detect them about 15 minutes before detonation over the traget.

Development Discussed

Soviet development of a low-altitude weapon was indicated by Col. Gen. Nikolai V. Yegorov, chief of the political department of the Strategic Rocket Forces.

General Yegorov spoke of Soviet rocket development in an interview with Tass, the Soviet press agency, on the eve of Rocket and Artillery Forces Day. The holiday commemorates the day 25 years ago when Soviet artillery and infantry-support rocket units opened a massive bombardment prior to a counterattack on German troops at Stalingrad.

Describing the Nov. 7 parade of new missiles through Red Square, the general said:

"At the end of the parade were giant rockets with unlimited range, pinpoint accuracy and flight-trajectory parameters that make nuclear-missile blows sudden and unavoidable."

From Silos and Platforms

The missiles referred to by General Yegorov were about 110 feet long and 10 feet in diameter. Soviet press reports said that they were solid-fuel weapons designed for launching either from underground silos or from surface platforms.

Some western military attachés who were on Red Square considered it possible that the blunt-nosed missiles were the weapons described by Mr. McNamara.

General Yegorov's use of the term "flight-trajectory parameter" seemed to suggest that the new missiles were designed to strike a target before completing a full orbit of the earth.

General Yegerov's demarks about the new weapon were followed tonight with similar descriptions by Marshal Nikolai I. Krylov, commander in chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces.

Speaks at Rally

Speaking at a rally to make the artillery and rocket holiday, the marshall said after praising newly developed mobile intercontinental missiles:

"Of late, the Soviet Union has developed other powerful missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads to targets along ballistic and orbital trajectories. The warheads of these rockets carry devices to break through the enemy's antimissile defenses."

In Secretary McNamara's news-conference remarks about Soviet development of a weapon that would drop on a target before competing a full orbit of the earth, he said that the United States had coisidered such a system but that it had rejected it as unfeasible and unnecessary.

A missile put into orbit, Mr. McNamara explained, would be limited to carrying a warhead of conisderably less destructive power than one fired in a ballistic trajectory. Also, he added, it would have "significantly less" accuracy than a ballistic missile.

U. S. Detection Methods

Mr. McNamara said that the peril of reduced warning time of an attack by low-altitude missiles would be offset by the United States' deployment by next February of over-the-horizon radar able to detect the weapons son after they were launched.

Other material today in the Soviet press on missiles included a description of a secret test center and reports that Soviet launching sites weer well concealed, in some cases camouflaged to look like small villages.

The accuracy and reliability of a new silo-launched missile, apparently the one displayed Nov. 7, were acclaimed today in Krasnaya Zvezda, the Soviet Defense Ministry newspaper. The article said:

"The rocket can be mounted in an underground silo on a launching base and can remain there for years, virtually with no need of being touched by human hands, waiting for its moment. All that has to be done at the time of firing is to dial a code and within seconds the rocket is on the way to the target."